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DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

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For immediate release:
September 27, 2007

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Virginia students can earn money for school through AmeriCorps service

Improve the community while receiving educational and career-building benefits

Richmond, Va. – College students interested in earning money for school – and bettering their communities – have a unique opportunity to do both through AmeriCorps service.

Applications are now being accepted for AmeriCorps members in the Commonwealth. Hundreds of Virginians will have the opportunity to provide intensive, results-driven service while receiving many incentives, including health insurance, a stipend for living expenses and work experience. Participation is open to all Virginians age 17 and older, legally residing in the Commonwealth. Although most AmeriCorps members are past or present college students, this is not required, nor is there an upper age limit.

While the financial incentives are beneficial, volunteers receive much more. AmeriCorps member Myron O. “Mo” Haskins wants more young adults to understand how meaningful service can be. In his second year with the Mountain Empire Community College AmeriCorps Tutoring Program, Haskins has had the opportunity to see firsthand how one person can touch many lives. “Every group project we have ever done has been memorable - actually priceless,” Haskins said. As a tutor and mentor, Haskins hopes to foster the spirit of community service among young people.

Four reasons to become an AmeriCorps member:

1) Monetary education awards

For one year of full-time service, AmeriCorps members are eligible to receive an education award to pay for college, graduate school, or to pay back qualified student loans. Part-time members may receive a partial award. Since 1994, more than 5,500 Virginians have qualified for nearly \$20 million in AmeriCorps Education Awards.

2) Living allowance and health insurance

While serving, AmeriCorps members may receive a modest living allowance. Some also

receive health insurance, training and student loan postponement. Virginia members are eligible for Workers' Compensation.

3) Community and individual benefits

The impact of AmeriCorps volunteerism extends beyond a member's term of service. Since 1993, several nationwide studies have found that national service alumni remain more connected to and knowledgeable about problems facing their communities. Many members go on to choose public service careers.

4) Resume enhancement

AmeriCorps volunteer work demonstrates that potential employees have practical skills, can function in a work environment and care about their communities. Members also receive valuable training during their service.

Virginia's AmeriCorps members serve with national nonprofit agencies, such as Habitat for Humanity and Big Brothers Big Sisters, and many smaller community organizations. In the Commonwealth, the AmeriCorps State program is administered through the Virginia Department of Social Services' (VDSS) Office on Volunteerism and Community Service (OVCS). "The ultimate goal is to bring Virginians together to strengthen communities through service. Serving with AmeriCorps is a unique volunteer opportunity that provides excellent incentives and promotes education," said OVCS Executive Director Nikki Nicholau.

More than 20 service organizations throughout the Commonwealth are participating in AmeriCorps programs this year. To find opportunities in your region, visit: www.vaservice.org and click on "Join AmeriCorps," or contact the Virginia Office on Volunteerism and Community Service at (800) 638-3839 or (804) 726-7065.

The Virginia Department of Social Services administers social services programs, consistent with federal and state law and policy of the State Board of Social Services, through 120 local departments of social services throughout the state and its home office in Richmond. The VDSS mission is "People helping people triumph over poverty, abuse, and neglect to shape strong futures for themselves, their families and communities."

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Interviews are available upon request. A podcast is attached featuring sound clips for your use. For additional story ideas and information, contact Carla Harris, VDSS, (804) 726-7107 or carla.harris@dss.virginia.gov.